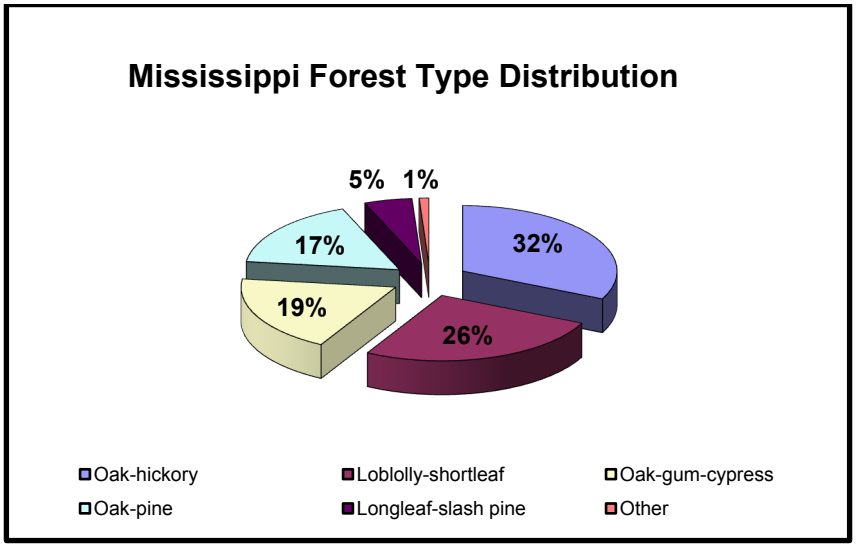
Mississippi

Forest Health Highlights 2011

The Resource

Mississippi's forests cover 19.9 million acres, more than 65% of the state's land area. Some 13.1 million acres of the states forested land is in non-industrial private ownership, while approximately 1.1 million acres are in national forests. Mississippi's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat throughout the state. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress.



Redbay Ambrosia Beetle was detected for the first time in Jackson County, MS in July, 2009. This insect carries the fungus that causes Laurel Wilt Disease. Since its introduction on the East Coast, it has caused considerable mortality to redbay, swamp bay, sassafras, and to a lesser degree other species of Lauraceae. Current distribution records indicate the disease is present from North Carolina to Florida on the East Coast, as well as coastal Mississippi and Alabama. During the summer of 2011 the disease was also discovered in Marengo Co., AL (east of Meridian, MS).The infestation in Mississippi continues to expand, and is now present throughout the majority of Jackson Co. in redbay, swamp bay, sassafras, as well as camphor tree.

JoeMacGown and John Riggins – Mississippi State University

Southern pine beetle (SPB) has historically been Mississippi's most significant forest insect pest. Populations statewide have been very low for a number of years. In 2011, activity was again low, as was predicted from springtime surveys of 14 counties by the Mississippi Forestry Commission.Only two spots have been detected on state and private lands. The SPB is still present but at extremely low levels. Activity on federal lands was at extremely low levels as well. The MFC continues to administer a comprehensive SPB Prevention/Education Program to teach landowners about the benefits of thinning for the reduction of SPB hazard. In addition to the educational aspects of this program, there is an associated statewide cost-share program to assist landowners in getting the thinning accomplished.

Pine engraver beetles (*Ips* spp.) activity continues at a low-moderate level. Twenty-three *Ips* spots were detected from aerial surveys.

Non-Native Woodborer Surveys were conducted in south Mississippi over a four-week period in Spring of 2011. The survey was part of the Nation-wide Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) program and was funded by the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Forest Health Protection. Twelve different locations were selected for the survey due to their proximity to high-risk locations such as International shipping ports, airports, campgrounds, and large nursery operations. Thirty-six total traps were deployed and baited with attractant lures to draw in a wide array of wood boring pests. No new exotic pests were detected during the survey.

Don't Bring Firewood With You magnet as used by the Mississippi Forestry Commission

Sudden Oak Death surveys were conducted again in 2011 by pathologists from Mississippi State University and other federal agencies. The surveys focused on baiting water courses with susceptible leaves to detect the presence of the pathogen *(Phytophthoraramorum)* downstream from potential sources. If established in or outside of horticultural nurseries that have received potentially infected stock from shippers in California, the pathogen can show up in drainage water. A positive stream baiting obtained in late 2007 outside a nursery in the Jackson area caused concern initially. Sampling continued during 2011. At present, the pathogen is not considered to be established in the natural environment.

Cogongrass is a non-native, invasive plant that has been spreading aggressively in Mississippi in recent years. It takes over native grasses and vegetation and is a fire hazard under pine plantations. The severity and extent of infestations have increased considerably in the disturbed forests following hurricane Katrina in 2005. The state has a Cogongrass Task Force that is coordinating efforts to assist landowners and agencies with control/management of this species. The Mississippi Forestry Commission has developed a Statewide Campaign on Cogongrass Awareness, Identification and Suppression. An invasive species spraying program funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act resulted in herbicide treatment on more than 200 acres in almost 17,000 different locations throughout 20 Mississippi counties during 2011.

J.R. Meeker, Florida Division of Forestry, Bugwood.org

Forest Health Assistance in Mississippi

Mississippi Forestry Commission **660 North Street** **Suite 300** **Jackson, MS 39202** **601-833-6621** **Randy Chapin, Forest Health Coordinator** **rchapin@mfc.state.ms.us** **http://www.mfc.state.ms.us**	**USDA Forest Service** **Southern Region, State & Private Forestry** **Forest Health Protection** **2500 Shreveport Hwy.** **Pineville, LA 71360** **318-473-7286** **http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/foresthealth/**